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1. Fighting qualities of the Bulgarian Air Force

Due to ruthless discharges and purges of the officer corps the fighting qualities of the Bulgarian Air Force were low in February 1949.

The bomber units and the School for Bomber and Blind-Flying Pilots were particularly hit by these measures. The aircraft available at this school were inadequate for the training of modern bomber pilots, and the same applies to the remaining instruction personnel. All the specialists had been discharged. No Bulgarian pilot has acquired the blind-flying certificate since 9 September 1944. Most of the flight instruments were unserviceable.

2. The attitude of the Soviet Union toward the Bulgarian Air Force

So far, the Soviet Union has not shown a pronounced interest in the training of Bulgarian Air Force units. Technical manuals or magazines were not placed at the disposal of the Bulgarians. In 1946, the Soviets refused to admit the selected Bulgarian Air Force officers to a course of the Soviet General Staff Academy. The Bulgarian Air Force officers returned from the Soviet Union have so far not shown any understanding for an improvement of the methods of training and of the fighting qualities of the air force units.

3. Purge of the Officer Corps

Fifty-five officers and pilots have been discharged from the Bulgarian Air Force since May 1948. Those discharged included the former CO of the fighter divisions, Lt Col Krestiu ATANAZOFF, the CO of the bomber division, Lt Col Boris POPOFF, and a large number of squadron leaders of the bomber and ground attack units. After the purges most of the remaining officers were promoted former NCOs who were not capable of their new assignment and whose technical and practical knowledge was inadequate. For instance, the CO of the 26th Ftr Regt in KARLOVO (B 2/A 55), 1st Lt Nedyu ATSMANOV was a former NCO, who in 1945 graduated from an 8-month course at the reserve officer school and was then promoted to second lieutenant. On the

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other hand, the proven fighter pilot Maj STOYANOV was transferred to the Hq of the Air Force since he did not enjoy the confidence of the new regime.

4. General Staff Officers

Only two old general staff officers were left, i.e. Col Petko KOLEBAKOFF, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Maj Christo FLICHEFF, Chief of the Operations Department. 1st Lt STAMENOV and 1st Lt Pasho ILIEN graduated from the Soviet General Staff Officers Academy in late 1943. Capt Ganche DIMITROV had attended the General Staff Officers Academy in the Soviet Union. In February 1949, he was assigned to the Hq of the Bulgarian Air Force.

5. NGO Corps

The status of training of the NGO corps was bad. Many discharges had also been decreed here for political reasons. Due to the low pay and poor economic conditions an additional number of NGOs had voluntarily left the air force to take civilian jobs.

25X1 ☐ Comments:

For lack of comparable information the individual data of this report cannot be verified. However, the information seems credible on the whole, since the treatment of the Bulgarian Air Force by the Soviet Union is in accordance with that applied to the other satellite air forces.

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